



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

From the Way of Confucius to the Way of Christ (Review of Confucius for Christians: What an Ancient Chinese Worldview can Teach us about Life in Christ by Gregg A. Ten Elshof)

Citation for published version:

Chow, A 2016, 'From the Way of Confucius to the Way of Christ (Review of Confucius for Christians: What an Ancient Chinese Worldview can Teach us about Life in Christ by Gregg A. Ten Elshof)', *Expository Times*, vol. 128, no. 2, pp. 99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524616660667k>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1177/0014524616660667k](https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524616660667k)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Expository Times

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



From the Way of Confucius to the Way of Christ

Gregg A. Ten Elshof, *Confucius for Christians. What an Ancient Chinese Worldview can Teach us about Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2015. £9.99. pp. vii+102. ISBN 978-0-8028-7248-7).

The volume under review is not an academic monograph on the given subject. It contains no footnotes, no bibliography, and no index. The author claims he is neither a Christian apologist nor a pluralist, two extremes of an unhealthy rejection or embrace of Confucianism. Instead, 'in this book, we'll interact with Confucianism as a wisdom tradition – more like Platonism than like Islam' (pg. 6). With an allegiance to Jesus Christ, Biola University professor of philosophy Gregg Ten Elshof expresses his appreciation for the reflections of Confucius for Christians in their commitment and practice of the Christian faith.

Four chapters elaborate on what he sees as core themes of Confucianism: family, learning, ethics, and ritual. Each chapter is introduced with an allegorical story before entertaining Western and Confucian responses to the given topic and concluding that Confucius should be commended for views and virtues which can likewise be said of Christ. He mainly engages the early Confucian text, the *Analects*. For a tradition that is over two and a half millennia old, this is akin to writing a book on Moses and ignoring the history of Jewish and Christian commentary. While this is a limited representation of the 'Confucian worldview' or the 'Confucian tradition', Ten Elshof juxtaposes the thinking of two greats: Christ and Confucius. He gets some facts wrong (e.g., on pg. 13, it is not Confucius who speaks of the 'five relations' but Mencius) and does not dedicate chapters to themes which have traditionally been underscored within Confucianism (e.g., humaneness, righteousness, etc.).

The book should be commended for introducing Western Christians to Confucius, but will leave many readers in want for more. In fact, this is the author's intention. The final chapter, entitled 'Sam', narrates a story about a faithful Christian who had a small flourishing family and a growing, yet stressful, career. Now living 1,000 miles away from his hometown, Sam missed the wisdom of his parents and the slowness necessary to experience life with his children. Caught in the traps of the American dream, this parable ends with Sam being inspired by Confucius to become a better Christian. He concludes (pg. 102), 'Were Sam writing this book, he would wholeheartedly recommend an exploration of the Confucian tradition starting with the *Analects*. And so do I.' Ten Elshof's book is an invitation to Christian laypersons to see how the way of Confucius can help remove barriers formed by contemporary Western society and better open the believer to the way of Christ.

Alexander Chow
School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh